DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 256 812 TM 850 308

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TITLE Evaluative Summary of the Dade County Public Schools Elementary Gifted Program.
INSTITUTION Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL. Office of Educational Accountability.
PUB DATE Nov 84
NOTE 27p.; For related document, see ED 155 884.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academically Gifted; Attitude Measures; Educational Objectives; Elementary Education; Elementary School Teachers; *Parent Attitudes; Parent Participation; Program Evaluation; Program Implementation; Program Improvement; School Districts; Special Education; *Special Programs; Student Placement; Talent Identification; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Dade County Public Schools FL; Mail Surveys

ABSTRACT

The Elementary Gifted Program in the Dade County Public Schools (DCPS), Florida, serves approximately 2,000 elementary school students through 13 school-center programs and 12 recently implemented home-school-based programs. The school-center program involves transportation from the home school to the center two days per week, while the home-school-based model provided gifted instruction in the student's home school. This preliminary evaluation describes the planning objectives, and instructional activities which characterized the program and identifies parental preferences for program features. Data were collected from questionnaires mailed to parents of all gifted students and a survey of program teachers through visitations at all program sites. Problematic areas noted by parents included the amount of time taken to identify and place children in the program, their understanding of grading standards, their knowledge of groups interested in gifted education, and regular program versus gifted program interaction. Parents were most supportive of the program objectives of creativity, problem solving, and communications skills and content areas including qualitative pursuits and hard sciences. Teacher lesson plans, objectives, and activities appeared appropriate at almost every site. Based on these findings, seven recommendations are made for program improvement. The appendix contains the parent questionnaire and responses. (BS)

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DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EVALUATIVE SUMMARY OF THE DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ELEMENTARY GIFTED PROGRAM

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NOVEMBER, 1984

EVALUATIVE SUMMARY OF THE DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ELEMENTARY GIFTED PROGRAM

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Office of Educational Accountability
November, 1984

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Executive Summary

The Dade County Public Schools (DCPS) Elementary Gifted Program serves approximately 2,000 elementary-level students via 13 school-center programs and 12 recently implemented home-school-based programs. The school-center program involves transportation from the home school to the center for two days per week, whereas the home-school-based model provides for gifted instruction in the student's home school.

This evaluative summary involved the assessment of certain aspects of the Program from the perspective of parents and gifted program teachers. Surveys were sent to parents of all gifted students and visitations were made to all 25 of the program sites. The intent of the evaluation was to describe the planning, objectives and instructional activities which characterized the Program as well as parental preferences for those and other program features. Additionally, the number of students who had exited the Program during the 1983-84 school year (as well as reasons for this exiting) was documented.

Problematic areas noted by parents included the amount of time taken to identify and place children in the Program, their understanding of the standards used in grading, their knowledge of parent or other groups with special interest in gifted education; and regular-program vs. gifted-program interaction. Parents were, on balance, supportive of the criteria which were being used in the identification of students for the Program, the availability of "gifted teachers" for conferences, and the impact of the Program on their children in terms of behavior at home and the extent to which the Program had proven "stimulating" and "motivating." Parents were most supportive of creativity, problem solving, and communication skills as program objectives and were most supportive of content areas which included the qualitative pursuits and hard sciences (as opposed to the social sciences for example) as well as the notion of a full-time school for the gifted. Some differences between the responses provided by home-school-based, as opposed to gifted center programs were noted. Visitations to program sites revealed that virtually all instructors described objectives that fit within the framework of gifted programming and virtually all instructional approaches mentioned were relevant. Lesson plans appeared to be in good order at all but four of the 25 sites. Plans which were examined contained all important factors (with the exception of methods to evaluate student performance) in the majority of cases. Procedures to contact parents as well as regular program teachers appeared to be in place; however, as was also noted in responses to the parent questionnaire, communication with the regular program teachers and schools appeared to be problematic.

Finally, only approximately 7% of the Elementary Gifted pupil population had exited the Program sometime during the 1983-84 school year; the most frequently noted reason being that the students' families had moved.

In view of the findings of this preliminary evaluation, the following recommendations are made:

1. The process of student identification/placement should be reviewed toward the end of shortening the period of time from the initial consideration of a child for entry into the Gifted Program to the time of his/her eventual placement (or other decision).

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2. All parents should be given the opportunity to participate in an orientation prior to, or coinciding with, the child's entrance into the Program.

3. Information regarding the existence of parent groups with special interest in gifted education should be more widely disseminated.

4. Information descriptive of the standards which are used to assign grades in the gifted program should be more widely disseminated to parents of program students. The relative lack of criteria for the evaluation of objective accomplishment (noted in the on-site visitations and examination of lesson plans) may be a sign that objective assessment methods, which should underly the assignment of grades, are lacking.

5. Procedures to enhance the communication with and cooperation received from regular program teachers (especially in the context of the gifted center program) should be explored and implemented on a trial basis to determine their utility. A certain amount of antagonism or lack of interest may be inherent in the nature of the interaction between these groups of professional educators, however.

6. To the extent possible, consideration should be given to increasing the exposure (time) allocated to gifted instruction, somewhat increasing the number of opportunities for the gifted to experience "off-campus" activities and reducing the size of the average class.

7. DCPS should explore the possibility of seeking an exception to the currently in-force statutes which prohibit the temporary reassignment of gifted students to the regular program if their performance in those classes begins to deteriorate.

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Introduction

In the late Spring of the 1983-84 school year, a preliminary evaluation of the DCPS Elementary Gifted Program was performed. The initial focus of the study was to document the kind of objectives which were "driving" the program at the local school/center level, and the kinds of academic (or other) content which were furnishing a medium for instruction. As input from interested parties (parent advisory/oversight committees, DCPS program administrators, etc) was obtained, the scope of the study broadened to include other issues. The study, as actually conducted, involved a survey of all parents whose children were enrolled in the Elementary Gifted Program, on-site interviews with all home-school-based and gifted center teachers, and a determination of the number of students who had exited the program at any point during the 1983-84 school year and the reason(s) for their leaving.

The DCPS Elementary Program for Gifted students is delivered via gifted school-centers and home-school-based models. The center model provides instructional exposure to students two days per week with the students transported to the centers from their home schools. The home-school-based model provides instruction via a teacher at the home-school site. While several teachers may be involved in the provision of instruction at the centers, only one teacher provides instruction at the home-school-based site. There are 13 school-center programs and 12 home-school-based programs currently operational.

The Gifted Program for the elementary student emphasizes a qualitatively differentiated curriculum based on content concepts, and application via products in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The process of meeting the instructional objectives may be modified via curriculum models for gifted delivery such as the Structure of Intellect (Guilford) and Triad models (Renzulli). Gifted programs provide an environment that is flexible and individualized. Instructional goals emphasize maximum development of intellectual competencies, creativity, social responsibility and self-realization through the content areas.

Gifted program students are expected to meet the instructional objectives of the Dade County School's Balanced Curriculum. In addition, the content concepts are applied via creative and innovative modes or by presentation to selected target audiences.

Results

Survey of Parents of Elementary Gifted Students

The section of the report which follows is presented via a question and answer format. Data descriptive of responses to each item on the parent questionnaire are presented in the appendix to this report. Responses to many of the questionnaire items which are discussed below were given in terms of a five-point scale (strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5) with an additional option provided for parents who felt that they did not have sufficient information to respond. In describing the responses to these items the percentages of those who "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" are usually added together, as are the percentages of those who "strongly agreed" or "agreed". These percentages do not total to 100% since they do not include respondents who selected the "neither agree not disagree" option. Characteristically, those items which received "program-unfavorable" responses by 20% or more of the respondents are highlighted in the discussions which are provided.

Generally speaking, very few respondents chose the "insufficient information to respond" option, indicating that the vast majority of respondents felt adequately informed to respond to the items in this part of the questionnaire. Strong exceptions to this general statement were noted in the case of item number 23 (regarding the gifted grading system), item number 28 (regarding the desirability of a uniform, across-schools grading system), and item number 31 (regarding the extent to which gifted and regular teachers shared information about students' progress).

How representative (of the entire population of DCPS elementary "gifted" parents) are respondents to the parent's survey? District records obtained from the Office of Advanced Academic Programs indicate that the ethnic composition of the Elementary Gifted Program for 1983-84 (grades 1-6) was 73% White, 13% Black, 12% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. The sample of parents who responded to the questionnaire closely approximated this racial/ethnic breakdown (White 79%, Black 8%, Hispanic 10%, and Asian 3%).

Two thirds (66%) of the parent respondents had children enrolled in Gifted Center programs while one-third (34%) indicated that their children were attending "Home-School-Based" Program schools. These figures reflect the predominant role of the Gifted Centers which actually have a larger percentage (79%) of students enrolled in their programs than do the Home-School-Based programs (21%).

In sum, the sample of respondents is reasonably similar to the population of Elementary Gifted parents in terms of racial/ethnic mix and program type.

What do respondents say about issues related to the identification/placement of children into the Program? In terms of selecting students for the Program, the most substantial percentages of parents felt that "great" or "moderate" emphasis should be placed on intelligence (99%), creativity (95%), specific academic ability; e.g., grades (90%) and willingness to accept challenge (89%). Interestingly, the extent of support for the other seven criteria which were listed (see questionnaire item #42) fell off dramatically, the next most favored criteria being interest in academic pursuits (78%) and appropriate classroom behavior (72%).

The majority of responding parents (71%) felt that the amount of time taken to identify and place their child in the Gifted Program was "reasonable" (24% disagreed with this statement).

In sum, the amount of time to "identify and place" emerged as problematic; but the characteristics which are taken into account in deciding whether or not to admit a candidate to the gifted program (most particularly intelligence) were strongly supported.

What is perceived to be the quality of communications with and about the Gifted Program? A majority of responding parents (65%) indicated that they were first made aware of the Gifted Program through either regular program teachers (40%) or parents of other gifted students (25%). Around three-fourths (76%) of the responding parents agreed that they had been informed of a parent orientation meeting prior to their child's entrance into the Elementary Gifted Program (19% disagreed).

Eighty-four percent indicated that they had visited their child's Gifted Program since the beginning of school in September of 1983; of these, the median number of "substantial" visits indicated was approximately three (not including brief contacts). Virtually all responding parents (95%) indicated that their visit had helped to increase their understanding of the Program at least "to some extent".

Thirty percent of responding parents felt that they had not received adequate information regarding the standards which were used to determine their children's grades, but only 16% indicated that they had not been adequately informed regarding their child's progress in the Program. The vast majority (87%) indicated that Gifted teachers were "available" for conferences when required (only 2% felt that this was definitely not the case).

In terms of present knowledge about the Program and related "special interest" groups, 66% were aware of the fact that Gifted programs were available at all grade levels and fewer than half (43%) knew that both school and district-level special interest groups existed.

In sum, although a majority of respondents gave what could be considered "program-favorable" responses to all items related to the Communication issue, some guidance for program improvement can be inferred. It could be concluded that a stronger attempt should be made to insure that all parents are exposed to some sort of initial orientation and that the standards which are used to assign grades in gifted course areas should be made more explicit. Additionally, the fact that Gifted programming exists at all grade levels and that organizations with special interest in Gifted programming exist at both the school and district levels should be more widely communicated.

How do parents react to various features of the currently operational Elementary Gifted Program? Only a bare majority (56%) of the respondents agreed that they had been adequately informed of the standards which were used to determine their children's grades in the Gifted Program (30% disagreed); however, 70% indicated that they felt an adequate grading system was operational within their child's Gifted Program (17% disagreed).

In terms of facilities and costs, about three-quarters of the responding parents (73%) felt that the classroom facilities were adequate in terms of size for the provision of gifted instruction (17% disagreed). Most respondents (90%) indicated that they did not feel that the costs they incurred for field trips or other "off-campus" Gifted Program activities were burdensome.

Overall, the vast majority of parents (93%) indicated that they were "most pleased" or "somewhat pleased" with the Elementary Gifted Program. Only a very small percentage (4%) indicated displeasure with the Program. It should be noted that only 2% of the respondents indicated that they were not sufficiently aware of the specific nature of their children's program to respond to this issue.

In sum, it would appear that greater effort should be expended in informing parents of the standards which are used to determine grades in the Gifted Program.

How do respondents characterize the interaction between the gifted and regular programs? Almost all of the responding parents (92%) indicated that their children had been able to keep up with their lessons in the regular program. Almost three-quarters of the respondents (74%) felt that their children had been adequately informed regarding regular class homework assignments (18% disagreed). Interestingly, only 56% of the responding parents thought that their children should actually have to make up work missed while they were attending Gifted Program classes.

Finally, relatively few parents (42%) felt that gifted and "regular" teachers adequately shared information about their children's progress and 25% felt that their children were "penalized" by the regular classroom teacher because of their participation in the Gifted Program.

In sum, gifted and regular program interaction emerged as one of the most problematic areas addressed by this survey. Appropriate means should be undertaken to remediate these areas of difficulty.

What do parents perceive to be the impact of the Gifted Program on their children? The survey incorporated three items to assess the perceived impact of the Program on various dimensions of students' behavior. Sixty-five percent of the responding parents indicated that their children's behavior/attitudes at home had changed positively since their enrollment in the Gifted Program (only 8% disagreed). Additionally, 52% felt that their children were performing "better" in the regular program as a result of their participation in the Gifted Program (14% disagreed), and virtually all respondents (88%) felt that their children were adequately "stimulated and motivated" by the Program (only 5% disagreed).

In sum, the majority of those expressing an opinion about the impact of the elementary Gifted Program did so in a "program-favorable" fashion. Most positive reaction was given in response to the adequacy of the program's "stimulation and motivation", least positive to the proposition that participation in the Gifted Program had actually improved students' performance in the "regular" program.

What do parents feel should characterize the optimal Gifted Program? Ten items were included in the questionnaire to obtain the parameters of what parents would consider to be the "ideal" Gifted Program. These items focussed on such areas as underlying objectives and instructional content, optimal class size, and instructional exposure.

Seventeen components or objectives were listed which "could provide a basis for gifted instruction". With few exceptions, all items listed conveniently fit within the gifted education spectrum. The most substantial percentages of parents indicated that "great" or "moderate" programmatic emphasis should be placed on creativity, problem solving, and communication skills (98% each) followed by problem identification skills, decision making skills, and critical thinking skills (97% each). Interestingly, one of these components (communication skills) might be more properly considered a "basic skill" than a stereotypic objective of "gifted programming"; where, for the most part, higher level cognitive skills are addressed. Lowest "emphasis" percentages were given in the cases of career awareness (67%) and intellectual competition skills (72%).

Ten content areas, "through which gifted instruction might take place," were also listed for parent evaluation. The content areas which parents felt should be strongly emphasized to the greatest degree were science (96%); writing, including creative writing and poetry (95%); reading, including literature (94%); mathematics (93%); and oral expression and computer education, each with 92% ratings. The lowest "emphasis ratings" were given to history, economics, and comparative cultures, with a maximum of 75% of responding parents indicating that "great" or "moderate" emphasis should be placed on these content areas.

In sum, quantitative pursuits and the "hard" sciences, along with communication skills appear to be favored over the social sciences, although substantial percentages of respondents still felt that the latter should be emphasized as instructional media.

In terms of procedural matters, the majority of those who felt that they had sufficient information to respond indicated that "somewhat more time" should be allocated to gifted programming (53%). Forty three percent of the "informed" respondents felt that "a few more" off-campus activities should be scheduled, and 48% felt that the optimal gifted class size was 11-15 students (considerably below currently operational class size cap). It should be noted that a substantial percentage (38%) of the respondents to the first item (regarding the time that should be allocated to gifted programming) indicated that they did not have sufficient information to respond to that item.

The vast majority of responding parents (83%) felt that there should be provisions for gifted students to be temporarily re-assigned to the regular program if their performance in those classes began to seriously deteriorate.

In terms of more global, programmatic concerns, the most substantial percentage of parents supported an approach to gifted instruction favoring slightly more enrichment (i.e., the provision of wide-ranging exploration of many facets of a given topic) than acceleration of movement from one level of instruction to another. About as many parents agreed as disagreed that a "uniform instructional design" should be required for all schools comprising the Elementary Gifted Program. Finally, a substantially greater percentage of parents agreed than disagreed that a full-time school for the gifted should be established (56% vs. 34%).

What are some evident differences between the responses of parents of Gifted Center children as opposed to Home-School-Based children? All items in the questionnaire were examined for differences between responses given by "center" parents as opposed to "home school-based" parents. Promising differences were subjected to further statistical analyses. Those differences which were found to be statistically significant form the basis for the discussion which follows (see Table I).

A significantly larger percentage of home-school-based parents (79%) than center school parents (67%) believed that the amount of time taken to identify and place their children in the Elementary Gifted Program was reasonable. In terms of the support given the Gifted Program by regular classroom teachers, significantly more home-school-based program parents felt that the regular teachers supported the program (73%) than did center school parents (58%).

while two-thirds (64%) of the home-school-based program parents agreed that their child's Gifted Program teacher and regular teacher adequately shared information about their child's progress, less than one-third (31%) of the center program parents agreed with this statement.

TABLE I
Analyses of Differences (Center vs. Home-School-Based)
in Responses to Selected Items

Question		Mean	SD	2-tail Prob.
Amount of time taken to identify and place child was reasonable (Q12)	Home	3.94	1.10	
	Center	3.45	1.37	0.000*
Child penalized by regular teacher (Q13)	Home	2.12	1.22	
	Center	2.67	1.40	0.048*
Regular teacher supports gifted program (Q14)	Home	4.00	1.02	
	Center	3.40	1.25	0.003*
Amount of homework is excessive (Q26)	Home	2.11	0.93	
	Center	1.73	0.70	0.000*
Teachers share information (Q31)	Home	3.59	1.21	
	Center	2.69	1.28	0.393
Favor full-time gifted schools (Q33)	Home	3.14	1.50	
	Center	3.68	1.47	0.733

* Significant beyond .05 level of probability.

Almost three quarters (73%) of the home-school-based parents felt that their children were not penalized by the regular classroom teacher because of participation in the Gifted Program while significantly fewer (56%) center school parents responded in that manner.

As to the amount of homework (specific to the Gifted Program) for which their children were responsible, while significant differences were noted between responses of the two groups, only a very small percentage of parents from home-school-based programs (8%) and an even smaller percentage (3%) of parents from center school programs felt that the amount of homework their children had received was excessive.

In sum, "home-school-based" parents were significantly more favorably disposed than "gifted center" parents toward "identification/placement" time, the support shown the Gifted Program by regular program teachers, and the treatment of their children by regular program teachers. "Gifted center" parents were significantly more favorably disposed toward the amount of "gifted" homework given than were "home-school-based" parents.

In response to these data, a stronger effort should be made to maximize the cooperation and communication between the home school teachers and gifted center teachers.

Center/Home-School-Based Program Visitations

All gifted centers and home-school-based gifted programs were visited in the late spring of 1984 to define those objectives which were operational at the school/center level as well as the apparent relevance of the instructional approaches which were directed at their attainment. Additionally, data were gathered to ascertain the extent to which lesson plans contained critical elements and were routinely maintained. Finally, teachers of these programs were asked to describe methods used to communicate with parents as well as regular program teachers, and to describe their programs along an "enrichment vs. acceleration" continuum. The latter issue was raised in the parents' questionnaire and it was of interest to determine the extent to which parents' expressed desires and gifted instructors' descriptions of their orientation were congruent.

Program Objectives and Instructional Activities

In response to a question asking for "3-5 of the most important general objectives of your program," virtually all instructors (of both home-school-based and gifted centers) listed objectives that could be subsummed under either the Miami Model of Gifted Instruction or other relevant models, such as Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Skills. The exception to this generalization was one instructor who mentioned math/science as an objective intrinsic to gifted instruction. Most frequently mentioned (in decreasing order of frequency of mention) were socialization/interactive skills, critical thinking, and creativity.

Instructors were also asked to describe the instructional approaches which were used to attain each of the objectives which were mentioned. Judgments were then made as to whether or not approaches mentioned were "relevant" to the specific objectives, "irrelevant" or "unclear". Of the instructional approaches listed, only two examples were judged to be not relevant. Placing this in a wider perspective, only two of the 75 objective/instructional approach pairings which were attempted appeared irrelevant.

Lesson Plans

Lesson plans were maintained by all but four of the instructors who were interviewed (three home-school-based and one center). The interviewers noted the extent to which critical lesson plan elements (periods of instruction, keying of instructional activities to objectives, resources needed to support instruction, and the presence of ways to evaluate student performance) were included. These factors were, for the most part, actually included in the plans (as opposed to the instructor only providing a verbal explanation or having no explanation to offer). Of the critical features mentioned above, most present, in this fashion, were the noting of instructional periods (in 20 of 21 cases) followed by the keying of instructional activities to objectives and the noting of resources needed to implement instruction (both in 13/21 cases). The factor which was least present in the plans which were evaluated was methods to evaluate student performance.

Communication

Since "parent communication" as well as communication with "regular teachers" are frequently problematic in the context of "special programs", two questions related to these concerns were addressed.

Teachers who were interviewed were asked to indicate how frequently, and through what means, communication with parents took place. The customary center or home-school-based program listed four to five parent contact activities, most frequently mentioned being newsletters, open houses, IEP (and "other") conferences with parents, and report cards. The mention of not only a large number of methods by the various home-school-based and gifted center programs, as well as the specific mention of approaches to communication that imply regular, rather than "as needed" contacts (newsletters as opposed to parent conferences, for example) would seem to indicate that the centers as well as the home-school-based programs are actually employing a wide variety of communications methods.

Contact with "regular program" teachers was attempted through many means by gifted-center teachers, most frequently mentioned being teacher conferences, copies of report cards/IEPs, and visits to the home schools. Instructors at one site (a center) even had prepared a video-taped presentation designed to orient home-school teachers to their program. Many center-based "gifted" teachers felt that, in spite of their many attempts to communicate, a general lack of interest in gifted programming (on the part of "regular" program teachers) would have to be overcome before truly effective communications could take place.

Teachers of home-school-based gifted programs generally felt that there were no communication problems because of their physical proximity to regular program teachers, and mentioned very few formal communication methods.

Program Design

Finally, as did parents in response to their survey, the greatest proportion of responding teachers felt that their programs predominately dealt with "more enrichment than acceleration." The second highest frequency of response was to the "half enrichment and half acceleration" option. In separating responses for home-based from those of "center" programs, it was noted that the centers favored the "enrichment" side of the continuum to a greater extent than the home-school-based programs. Given the home-school-based teachers' simultaneous responsibility for content area instruction (through "compacting") this orientation is not surprising.

Discussion

It should be noted that limitations of a rather substantial nature attended this data collection effort. Although "appropriate" responses were characteristically given to questions involving program objectives and instructional activities, there was no way of assessing, in the brief interview, how efficiently these objectives were being pursued; that is, to what extent children's "characteristic" exposure to gifted programming challenged them optimally, on a daily basis.

Some rather consistent findings were noted as the interviews proceeded, however. In the examination of lesson plans, it was noted that there was some lack of definition of methods of evaluation that would assure that children in the Program were actually meeting their objectives. Additionally, there appeared to

be a problematic situation vis-a-vis the relationship between "gifted teachers" and those providing instruction in the regular program. As noted, this did not appear to be the case because of a lack of ideas or attempts on the part of "gifted teachers" to communicate, but rather because of a perceived lack of interest on the part of "regular program" teachers. This antipathy has been noted in other evaluations of "special programs" and arises for many reasons. Chief among these reasons is the perception that "special teachers" have to deal only with classes of much reduced size and that they have the opportunity to deal with more challenging material (often free from what are perceived to be the restrictions placed on them by mandated curriculum designs). As related to the Gifted Program, this antipathy is even more exacerbated by the perception that the Program is removing from the "regular" classroom the stimulating presence of some of the "best" students.

Exiting of Students from the Elementary Gifted Program

Instructors at each of the gifted centers or home-school-based programs were asked to provide lists of students who had withdrawn from the Program during the 1983-84 school year. Reasons for withdrawal were also requested.

Across the entire Elementary Gifted Program, a total of 139 students withdrew during the the 1983-84 school year. This figure represents 7.2% of the entire Elementary Gifted population. Of the 139, 44, or 32% were reported as having moved out of the District (or to other schools within the district). Excluding this group, a total of 95 (or 4.8%) of the total Elementary Gifted Program population withdrew for reasons which could be (fairly certainly) construed as being "program relevant." For the centers, this percentage was 5.6%; for the home-school-based programs, 2.2%.

Tables II through IV provide these figures for the gifted center and home-school-based programs separately and then combined. The reasons given for withdrawal are presented as they were stated.

TABLE II
Withdrawals from Gifted Centers, 1983-84

Reason	Number
Family moved	35
Couldn't keep up with work	11
Threatened on bus	2
Home school insisted	2
Staffed out	2
Home school problem	2
Adjustment/emotional problem	3
Parent request (no explanation)	16
Parent request (wanted child in home school)	3
Transfer to private school	2
Transportation problem	3
Transferred to Moton-Perrine Arts Program	1
Grades fell	8
Sickness	1
Pressure	1
Child didn't like program	3
Unknown	24
TOTAL	119

TABLE III
Withdrawals from Home-School-Based Programs, 1983-84

Reason	Number
Family moved	9
Couldn't keep up with work	3
Staffed out	1
Threatened on bus	1
Emotional problem	1
Parent request	2
School adjustment	1
Withdrawn - school request	2
TOTAL	20

TABLE IV
Total Withdrawals from Elementary Gifted Program, 1983-84

Reason	Number
Family moved	41
Couldn't keep up with work	14
Threatened on bus	3
Home school insisted	4
Staffed out	3
Home-school problem	2
Adjustment/emotional problem	5
Parent request (no explanation)	18
Parent request-wanted child in home-school	3
Transferred to private school	2
Transportation problem	3
Transferred to Moton-Perrine Art. Program	1
Grades fell	8
Sickness	1
Pressure	1
Child didn't like program	3
Unknown	24
TOTAL	139

Discussion/Recommendations

Problematic areas noted by parents included the amount of time taken to identify and place children in the Program, their understanding of the standards used in grading, their knowledge of parent or other groups with special interest in gifted education; and regular-program vs. gifted-program interaction. Parents were, on balance, supportive of the criteria which were presently used in the identification of students for the Program, the availability of "gifted teachers" for conferences, and the impact of the Program on their children in terms of behavior at home and the extent to which the Program had proven "stimulating" and "motivating." Parents were most supportive of creativity, problem solving, and communication skills as program objectives and were most supportive of content areas which included the qualitative pursuits and hard sciences (as opposed to the social sciences for example) as well as the notion of a full-time school for the gifted. Some differences between the responses provided by home-school-based, as opposed to gifted center programs were noted. Visitations to program sites revealed that virtually all instructors described objectives that fit within the framework of gifted programming and virtually all instructional approaches mentioned were relevant. Lesson plans appeared to be in good order at all but four of the 25 sites. Plans which were examined contained all important factors (with the exception of methods to evaluate student performance) in the majority of cases. Procedures to contact parents as well as regular program teachers appeared to be in place; however, as was also noted in responses to the parent questionnaire, communication with the regular program teachers and schools appeared to be problematic.

Finally, only approximately 7% of the elementary gifted pupil population had exited the program sometime during the 1983-84 school year; the most frequently noted reason being that the students' families had moved.

In view of the findings of this preliminary evaluation, the following recommendations are made:

1. The process of student identification/placement should be reviewed toward the end of shortening the period of time from the initial consideration of a child for entry into the Gifted Program to the time of his/her eventual placement (or other decision).

2. All parents should be given the opportunity to participate in an orientation prior to, or coinciding with, the child's entrance into the Program.

3. Information regarding the existence of parent groups with special interest in gifted education should be more widely disseminated.

4. Information descriptive of the standards which are used to assign grades in the Gifted Program should be more widely disseminated to parents of program students. The relative lack of criteria for the evaluation of objective accomplishment (noted in the on-site visitations and examination of lesson plans) may be a sign that objective assessment methods, which should underly the assignment of grades, are lacking.

5. Procedures to enhance the communication with and cooperation received from regular program teachers (especially in the context of the gifted center program) should be explored and implemented on a trial basis to determine their utility. A certain amount of antagonism or lack of interest may be inherent in the nature of the interaction between these groups of professional educators, however.

6. To the extent possible, consideration should be given to increasing the exposure (time) allocated to gifted instruction, somewhat increasing the number of opportunities for the gifted students to experience "off-campus" activities and reducing the size of the average class.

7. DCPS should explore the possibility of seeking an exception to the currently in-force statutes which prohibit the temporary reassignment of gifted students to the regular program if their performance in those classes begins to deteriorate.

APPENDIX

Parent Questionnaire
including
Response Data

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPA

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY
ELEMENTARY GIFTED PROGRAM EVALUATION

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE 1-4

Please Note: If you have more than one child currently enrolled in the Elementary Gifted Program, you may receive more than one survey form. Please complete and return one form only; responding in light of your experience with your youngest child's program if your last name begins with A through M, and your oldest child's program if your last name begins with N through Z.

1. Your Name (optional) _____

2. Name of Home-school or Gifted Center _____ 5-8

*3. Your relationship to child in gifted program (check one):

14% Father 86% Mother -0- Relative .3% Guardian 9

4. Your ethnicity (check one):

79% White, Non-Hispanic -- American Indian/Alaskan Native 10
8% Black, Non-Hispanic 3% Asian/Pacific Islander
10% Hispanic

5. Number of years your child has been in the Elementary Gifted Program (write in): 1 yr.=51%; 2yr.=22%; 3yr.=15%; 4yr.=7%; 5yr.=4%; 6yr.=1% 11

6. Sex of your gifted child (check one): 51% Male 48% Female 12

7. Grade level of your gifted child (write in): Mean = 4.0 13

8. Is your (elementary) gifted child in a Home-School Based or a Gifted Center program? (check one)

65% Gifted Center 34% Home-School Based Program 14

9. Have you visited your child's gifted program since September of 1983?

84% Yes 16% No 15

If yes: Approximately how many times have you visited the program in this period of time (do not count brief contacts; for instance, merely picking up or dropping off your child) (write in): Mdn.=2.6 16-17

Did your visit(s) help to increase your understanding of the program? (check one)

43% Yes, to a great extent 5% No 18
52% Yes, to some extent

*NOTE: Percentages may not total to exactly 100% because of rounding error.

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPA

10. Please indicate the number of brothers and/or sisters that your Elementary Gifted Program child has; also indicate the number of these who are currently in the Gifted Program (elementary or secondary).

	Mdn.	
Number of brothers	.8 (66% @ least one)	19-20
Number of sisters	.8 (66% @ least one)	20-21
Number of brothers in Gifted Program	.1 (22% @ least one)	22
Number of sisters in Gifted Program	.1 (21% @ least one)	23

Indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by selecting an appropriate number from the scale below and placing it to the right of each statement, on the line provided. NOTE: If, in the case of certain items, you do not have sufficient information about those aspects of the Program, please place a zero (0) on the appropriate response line(s).

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Insufficient Information
1	2	3	4	5	0

11.	I was informed of a parent orientation meeting prior to my child's entrance into the Elementary Gifted Program.	10%	9%	4%	38%	38%	____ 24
12.	I believe that the amount of time taken to identify and place my child in the Elementary Gifted Program was reasonable.	11%	13%	5%	45%	26%	____ 25
13.	I feel that my child is "penalized" by the regular classroom teacher because of his/her participation in the Gifted Program.	31%	31%	13%	15%	10%	____ 26
14.	The regular classroom teachers in my child's school seem to be supportive of the Gifted Program and the program's teacher.	5%	14%	17%	36%	27%	____ 27
15.	I have noticed positive changes in my child's behavior/attitude at home since his/her enrollment in the Gifted Program.	1%	7%	27%	36%	29%	____ 28
16.	My child's Gifted Program teacher has, for the most part, been available for conferences with me when requested.	1%	1%	10%	34%	53%	____ 29
17.	My child has been able to keep up with his/her lessons in the regular program.	1%	5%	3%	46%	46%	____ 30
18.	I feel that my child should make up work that was missed while he/she was attending the Gifted Program.	12%	16%	16%	33%	23%	____ 31
19.	My child has been adequately informed regarding "regular program" class and homework assignments.	4%	14%	7%	49%	25%	____ 32
20.	I have been adequately informed regarding my child's progress in the Gifted Program.	3%	13%	8%	47%	28%	____ 33
21.	I feel that my child is performing better in the regular program as a result of his/her participation in the Elementary Gifted Program.	1%	13%	33%	28%	24%	____ 34

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPA

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Insufficient Information
1	2	3	4	5	0

1% 4% 7% 43% 45%

22. I feel that the Elementary Gifted Program adequately stimulates and motivates my child. ____ 35

5% 12% 14% 49% 21%

23. An adequate grading system is currently operational within my child's Elementary Gifted Program. ____ 36

7% 23% 14% 40% 16%

24. I have been adequately informed of the standards which are used to determine the grades which my child receives in his/her Elementary Gifted Program. ____ 37

4% 15% 10% 50% 21%

25. My child is usually expected to make up "regular program" work which he/she missed because of participation in the Gifted Program. ____ 38

32% 54% 8% 5% 1%

26. I believe that the amount of homework (specific to the Gifted Program) for which my child is responsible is excessive. ____ 39

1% 2% 5% 36% 57%

27. I believe that my child's gifted teacher is adequately qualified. ____ 40

14% 23% 21% 23% 19%

28. I feel that a uniform instructional design should be required across the schools and centers comprising the Elementary Gifted Program. ____ 41

3% 7% 7% 47% 36%

29. I believe that there should be provisions for gifted students to be temporarily re-assigned, on a full time basis, back to the regular program, if their level of performance in "regular program" classes begins to seriously deteriorate. ____ 42

4% 13% 10% 54% 19%

30. I believe that the classroom facilities used in my child's gifted instruction are adequate in terms of size. ____ 43

18% 22% 17% 28% 14%

31. I feel that my child's gifted teacher and regular teachers adequately share information about my child's progress. ____ 44

51% 39% 6% 2% 2%

32. I feel that the costs which I incur to support my child's participation in field trips or other "off-campus" Gifted Program activities are excessively burdensome. ____ 45

13% 21% 10% 16% 40%

33. I would favor the establishment of a full-time school for the gifted. ____ 46

34. How do you feel about the amount of time currently allocated to instruction in the Elementary Gifted Program? (check one) 47

24% Much more time should be allocated to gifted instruction.

33% Somewhat more time should be allocated to gifted instruction.

4% Somewhat less time should be allocated to gifted instruction.

1% Much less time should be allocated to gifted instruction.

38% I do not have sufficient information to respond to this item.

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPA

35. How do you feel about the number of "off-campus" activities associated with your child's Gifted Program? (check one)

16% Many more off-campus activities should be scheduled. 48

39% A few more off-campus activities should be scheduled.

34% About the same number of off-campus activities should be scheduled.

1% Somewhat fewer off-campus activities should be scheduled.

1% Substantially fewer off-campus activities should be scheduled.

9% I do not have sufficient information to respond to this item.

36. What is your understanding of the availability of gifted programs? (check one)

3% Programs are available at the elementary level only. 49

13% Programs are available at the elementary and junior high school levels only

66% Programs are available at all grade levels.

17% I do not have sufficient information to respond to this item.

37. Through whom were you first made aware of the Gifted Program? (check one)

40% A "regular program" teacher 50

25% Parent(s) of a gifted student

3% A gifted program student

8% Your child's principal

2% Area-level staff

1% District-level staff

21% Other (write in): _____

38. What is your understanding regarding the existence of committees or other groups with special interest in the Gifted Program? (check one)

38% So far as I am aware, no group of this kind exists 51

19% Only school-level groups exist

43% Both school and district-level groups exist

39. What do you feel is the optimal size for a gifted class? (check one)

2% 1 - 5 students 52

30% 6 - 10 students

48% 11 - 15 students

18% 16 - 20 students

2% More than 20 students

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPA

40. In discussing various approaches taken in Gifted Program instruction, two terms, enrichment and acceleration, are often heard.

> Enrichment refers to the practice of providing wide ranging exploration of many facets of a given topic
>
> Acceleration refers to the practice of compressing the time it would ordinarily take to move a child from one level of instruction in a given area to a higher level.

Indicate the extent to which you feel that each of these approaches should be represented in elementary gifted instruction by checking one of the following options.

6%	all enrichment, no acceleration	53
42%	more enrichment than acceleration	
47%	half acceleration and half enrichment	
4%	more acceleration than enrichment	
1%	all acceleration, no enrichment	

42. Listed below are content areas through which gifted instruction might take place. Using the rating scale below, please indicate the extent to which you feel that each of the listed content areas should be emphasized in elementary gifted instruction.

Great Emphasis	Moderate Emphasis	Slight Emphasis	No Emphasis
4	3	2	1

1 & 2	3 & 4		
7%	93%	_____ mathematics (application to real-world problems, advanced math)	54
25%	75%	_____ history	55
13%	87%	_____ current events	56
31%	69%	_____ comparative cultures	57
6%	94%	_____ reading (including literature)	58
4%	96%	_____ science (both physical and biological, including ecology, energy, etc.)	59
5%	95%	_____ writing (creative writing, poetry, etc.)	60
8%	92%	_____ oral expression (speech, drama, etc.)	61
26%	74%	_____ economics (including consumerism)	62
8%	92%	_____ computer education	63
		_____ other (1) (specify) _____	64
		_____ other (2) (specify) _____	65
		_____ other (3) (specify) _____	66

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPA

Great Emphasis	Moderate Emphasis	Slight Emphasis	No Emphasis
4	3	2	1

42. Listed below are components which could provide a basis for gifted programming. Using the scale above, indicate the extent to which you feel that each of the listed components should be emphasized in gifted instruction.

1 & 2	3 & 4		
2%	98%	_____	creativity (the ability to generate unique and diverse solutions and/or products) 67
11%	89%	_____	social responsibility (individual responsibility to the larger society) 68
2%	98%	_____	problem solving 69
7%	93%	_____	independent study skills 70
5%	95%	_____	research skills 71
11%	89%	_____	individual/group planning skills 72
5%	95%	_____	evaluative thinking (the ability to judge a process or product using pre-established criteria) 73
2%	98%	_____	communication skills (oral and written) 74
3%	97%	_____	problem identification skills (the ability to identify and define a problem) 75
3%	97%	_____	decision making skills 76
3%	97%	_____	critical thinking (the ability to determine the meaning of a statement and whether to accept or reject it, via the application of logical processes) 77
13%	87%	_____	interpersonal skills 78
15%	85%	_____	synthesis (the ability to arrange elements in such a way as to produce a new product) 79
11%	89%	_____	self awareness 80
33%	67%	_____	career awareness 81
7%	93%	_____	the application of knowledge (to real-world problems) 82
28%	72%	_____	intellectual competition skills (e.g. Olympics of the Mind) 83
		_____	other (1) (specify) _____ 84
		_____	other (2) (specify) _____ 85
		_____	other (3) (specify) _____ 86

43. In general, please rate your child's Elementary Gifted Program experience by checking one of the options below:

66% I am most pleased with what I know of his/her experience. 87

27% I am somewhat pleased with what I know of his/her experience.

3% I am somewhat displeased with what I know of his/her experience.

1% I am most displeased with what I know of his/her experience.

2% I am not sufficiently aware of the nature of his/her program to provide a response to this item.

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPAC

44. Indicate the extent to which you feel that each of the following criteria should be considered in selecting children for the Elementary Gifted Program by placing the appropriate number, from the scale below, on the space provided to the left of each criterion.

Strong Consideration	Moderate Consideration	Slight Consideration	No Consideration
4	3	2	1

1 & 2	3 & 4		
1%	99%	_____	intelligence (as measured by a standardized intelligence test) 88
5%	95%	_____	creativity (as measured by a standardized test of divergent processing) 89
10%	90%	_____	specific academic ability (e.g. grades in math or verbal coursework) 90
28%	72%	_____	appropriate classroom behavior 91
42%	58%	_____	adequacy of adjustment in home/neighborhood setting 92
11%	89%	_____	willingness to accept challenge 93
22%	78%	_____	perceived (by classroom teacher) interest in academic pursuits 94
52%	48%	_____	artistic talent (dance, music, art) 95
69%	31%	_____	level of involvement in extra-curricular pursuits 96
42%	58%	_____	supportiveness of parents (in reference to child participating in the Gifted Program) 97
93%	7%	_____	socio-economic status 98
93%	7%	_____	nomination by fellow students 99